

Postal Regulatory Commission

Washington, D.C. 20268-0001

NOTICE OF FILING UNDER 39 U.S.C. § 404(d)

TO THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE:

Please take notice that the Commission received three petitions for review of the Postal Service's determination to close the Ashton post office in Ashton, Iowa. The first petition for review received December 9, 2011, was filed by Brian D. Mino. The second petition for review received December 9, 2011, was filed by Melvin Tiedemann, Mayor on behalf of the City of Ashton. The third petition for review received December 13, 2011, was filed by Alfreda Verdoorn. The earliest postmark date is November 30, 2011.

This notice is advisory only and is being furnished so that the Postal Service may begin assembling the administrative record in advance of any formal appeal proceedings held upon the alleged (closing/consolidation) for transmittal pursuant to 39 CFR § 3001.113(a) (requiring the filing of the record within 15 days of the filing with the Commission of a petition for review).



Shoshana M. Grove
Secretary

Date: December 28, 2011

Attachment



317 3rd Street
P.O. Box 278
Ashton, IA 51232-0278
www.ashtonstatebank.com

December 1, 2011

Ruth Y. Goldway, Chairman
Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20268-0001

Received

DEC 6 3 2011

Office of PAGR

2011 DEC -9 P 2:27

POSTAL REGULATORY
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Re: Ashton, IA 51232, Post Office Final Determination, Docket Number 1353512-51232

Dear Ms. Goldway and other Board Members:

I am appealing the decision of the United State Postal Service to close the Ashton, Iowa, 51232, Post Office. I feel that the postal service has not adequately evaluated the needs of the community and has ignored pertinent information presented to make their case for closure.

I will start with a brief introduction of myself, so you will see I am not an uninformed person that just thinks Ashton should have a post office because we always have. I am Brian Mino, President of the Ashton State Bank. I moved to Ashton in 1993 as a Vice President of the bank and have been President since 2001. In addition to this title, I am actively involved in Osceola County economic development and other civic boards. When the post office in Ashton was emergency suspended for a mold infestation in 2005, I headed a committee to work with postal officials to have the post office reopened locally and am still acting in that capacity. The post office is currently considered "Temporary" and has only 3.5 window hours daily.

My first objection to closure is from a business standpoint. The Ashton State Bank is a \$38 Million, community bank domiciled in Ashton. We have one location and that is in downtown Ashton. We are not a branch of another institution in a larger town or city. The postal service proposes to replace our post office with rural delivery service, with the rural carrier placing CBU's in our community. The rural carrier would deliver the mail and pick up the mail at the same time. This scenario will not work with the Ashton State Bank. If the rural carrier delivers the mail at 11:00 a.m., we certainly can post the transactions received by mail that day as the cutoff of our business day is at 3:00 p.m.. After 3:00 each day, we finish our daily activities and print overdraft / non-sufficient funds notices and other pertinent correspondence that needs to go out yet that day. If you were a customer of mine and your account was overdrawn and the notice was not mailed until tomorrow, versus today, and you incurred additional charges as a result of the mail delay, would you be happy. We don't like our customers incurring unnecessary charges any more than we like charging them. Customer service has always been our strength and delivery of time sensitive material is imperative. For this reason, we would be forced to drive to our new retail location in Sibley, Iowa to post this time sensitive mail. The trip to Sibley is approximately 15 miles round trip and would require at least 30 minutes of an employees time on a daily basis. The direct cost to the Ashton State Bank for this would be approximately \$75 per week or just short of \$4,000.00 per year.

Secondly, I am objecting based upon the postal service making an uninformed decision and furthermore ignoring pertinent information and correspondence. A public meeting was held in Ashton on May 2, 2011 to inform the community that the Ashton post office was being studied for closure. The meeting was led by Sara Lindauer and Kent Gochenour, Post Office Operations Manager for this area of Iowa. They discussed what this meant and then asked for public comment. I let the people of the community speak and then I gave a presentation which included Ashton's fight from 2005 to present to keep a post office and then told them some reasons why this wasn't right for Ashton. Mr. Gochenour said that the service would remain the same and I pointed out that it wouldn't because I have time sensitive mail and the Bank can not send and receive mail at the same time.

Following the meeting, I completed a survey that was provided to offer public comment. On May 24, 2011, I mailed a cover letter to Sara Lindauer along with the survey and a copy of my outline from the public meeting. I also sent cover letters and copies of this correspondence (which included my survey and outline) to Kent Gochenour, Post Office Operations Manager; Gail Duba, Hawkeye District Manager (the Hawkeye District contains Ashton); and Joni Martin, Consumer Affairs Manager for the Hawkeye District. Following this correspondence are their responses to me. As you can see, when they tell me "A community meeting was held on May 2, 2011" and I have provided an outline of my comments from this meeting, it appears they failed to read the correspondence and provided boilerplate feedback to me and ignored all of the information provided. If I had an employee respond in this manner, they would be severely reprimanded, if not worse. I find it particularly inconsiderate that the so-called Consumer Affairs Manager would do this. Maybe that is why neither of them are in those positions any longer.

I am also providing a copy of my last attempt at telling Post Office Operations Manager Kent Gochenour that I have time sensitive mail and that I will be forced to drive the mail to another location at the expense of the Ashton State Bank. Once again, Mr. Gochenour responds by singing the financial blues of the postal service and fails to address my concern at all.

Lastly, I am providing a copy of the final determination. No where in this document does it state that someone brought to their attention that time sensitive mail is an issue.

In closing, I realize that the postal service is experiencing huge financial losses and further acknowledge that they have to make changes to survive, however I disagree that closing every post office in small communities is the answer. As a banker, I realize that overhead is an enormous expense, but reducing overhead does not necessarily solve every problem. Furthermore, centralization may save some funds, but centralization is also nothing more than an immediate tax on those affected by the office closings. I believe I have shown that information has been presented for review in the decision making process and it has been ignored. I have also offered to try and reach a compromise such as sharing a Postmaster with a nearby community to cut costs. In return for my efforts, I have received form letters showing the Postal Service wants to be an island and do whatever they want without truly acknowledging the public's input. They have not even opened a dialogue to discuss anything in the correspondence. Ashton has tried to help the post office by living with a "temporary" office since the emergency suspension which certainly reduced their overhead, but all for not as the almighty United States Postal Service is intent on shuttering this office!

I welcome any and all comments. I can be reached by mail at: Brian D. Mino, President, Ashton State Bank, PO Box 278, Ashton, IA 51232-0278. I may also be reached by phone at: (712) 724-6326, (712) 724-6335 or (712) 461-0349 or via e-mail @ bmino@ashtonstatebank.com.

Sincerely,



Brian D. Mino
President / CEO

BDM/bdm
Attachments

Cc: U.S. Senator Charles Grassley
U.S. Senator Thomas Harkin
U.S. Congressman Steve King
Iowa State Senator David Johnson
Iowa State Representative Royd Chambers
T.J. Sexton
Mark J. Sexton

**CITY OF ASHTON
2191 NETTLE AVENUE
ASHTON, IA 51232-7042**

RECEIVED

2011 DEC -9 P 2: 27

POSTAL REGULATORY
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

November 30, 2011

Received

DEC 6 8 2011

Office of PAGR

Ruth Y. Goldway, Chairman
Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20268.0001

Re: Ashton, IA 51232, Post Office Final Determination, Docket Number 1353512-51232

To whom it may concern:

The United States Postal Service has issued a final determination to close the Ashton, Iowa 51232 post office, docket #1353512-51232. Upon completion, delivery and retail services will be provided by the Sibley, Iowa post office. The posting date of this determination was November 7, 2011.

The City of Ashton, Iowa is formally appealing the decision of the United States Postal Service to close the local office for the following reasons:

Ashton, IA was placed upon the list for closure due to past events, not based upon current status of the local post office.

In 2005, the local post office was closed under an emergency suspension due to poor environmental working conditions. The office was closed and temporarily physically relocated to Sheldon, Iowa. Local officials worked painstakingly with post officials to reopen a local office on a "temporary basis" with the intent of achieving a full-time post office.

Originally, a meeting was held with Doug Morrow (then head of the Hawkeye District), Mike Ward of the Western Region facilities division, Laurie Slater-Trautwein (Post Office Operations Manager at the time) and various representatives from the Ashton community. The decision at that time was to build a new facility and have the postal service lease on a short-term, renewable lease. This plan then changed as Mike Ward contacted Ashton officials and told them that the moratorium on long-term leases had been lifted, but that the project would then have to be done on a bid basis. This process was then completed, but a final location could not be achieved due to the location selected by the postal service and the unavailability of the site for construction.

Progress toward a full-time post office has always been ongoing between the City of Ashton and the Postal Service. On April 15, 2010, Garry Mattox of the Western Area came to Ashton to hold a public meeting. At the meeting, his basic message was that there were going to be some changes coming in the postal service and he wanted Ashton to have a new 5 year lease so we would not get caught up in this as Ashton should have a post office. He held a similar meeting in Alton, Iowa earlier that day for the same reason.

The community size of Ashton merits continuance of the existing facility.

There were 2 announcements of postal office closings being studied in Iowa. One was announced in the spring of 2011 and the second coming later in the year. Ashton was included in the first list, which included 74 rural post offices. There were 2 Sioux City locations, 1 Iowa City location and 1 Waterloo location left off our listing because they represented duplication of post offices in their cities. We have attached a copy of this list (Attachment A) and sorted based upon population. Ashton ranked 8th in population on this list. The same procedure was applied to the second list announced (Attachment B) which included 176 rural post offices. There were 2 Ames locations omitted from this list as they were duplicates within the City of Ames. Ashton was not part of this list, but based upon population, there were on 3 offices listed with populations larger than Ashton.

The lists were then merged together (Attachment C) with Ashton ranking 11th of the 248 post offices being studied in Iowa for closure. This would mean that Ashton has a population greater than 95.56% of the post offices being studied for closure in Iowa.

In further support of the population premise, please review the following community comparisons:

Little Rock, IA: The post office in Little Rock, Iowa was not included in either listing and their population is 459 residents. Little Rock is located 14 miles from Ashton, but 10 miles from Sibley. Ashton is located 7.5 miles from Sibley.

Melvin, IA: The post office in Melvin was not included in either listing and their population is 214 residents. Melvin is located 11 miles from Ashton. Melvin would be located 10 miles from Sanborn, which would be a larger community with postal operations.

Overview and Closing:

The City of Ashton feels that continuance of a post office is merited. We feel that the Ashton Post Office was placed on the list for closure because of the "temporary status" placed upon the post office beginning in 2006 and the lack of a full-time Postmaster. We have shown that our population is similar to or larger than other nearby communities and definitely larger than the vast majority of the other post office locations being considered for closure in Iowa. For this reason, we appeal the decision, but also would like to open a dialogue between the Postal Service and local Ashton officials. We would like to consider other alternatives to save the Postal Service money, while still maintaining a post office in Ashton. One idea in this area could be sharing of a Postmaster with another nearby community. We have shown that Ashton can survive on a partial day window and would assume that a similar community could as well. This would save the postal service labor costs while still maintaining routine postal service in both communities.

Sincerely,



Melvin Tiedemann, Mayor
City of Ashton

A2612-97

P.O.Box 277
Ashton, IA 51232
December 5, 2011

To the Postal Regulatory Commission:

RECEIVED

I feel that the closure of the Ashton Post Office just doesn't make sense. 2011 DEC 13 PM 2:00

We've been told that a reason for closing is that we don't have a postmaster. We don't NEED a highly-paid 'postmaster'. We are getting along well with an "officer-in-charge" and the reduced open hours. POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

We've been told that the second reason we are being closed is because the postal service is losing money. Our post office retail receipts have been \$36,534, \$31,557 and \$31,612 in the fiscal years between 2008-2010 and you project an annual cost savings of only \$25,974 by closing the Ashton Post Office. That doesn't make sense at all, so why close it?

Your criteria for closure seem to not be helping the problem but rather adding to it. It would seem to make much more sense to dismiss the higher-paid workers in other post offices. Since you have a policy of not wanting to dismiss any postmasters, it would seem that you should transfer them to a larger office and use more 'lesser paid' workers to keep open these smaller post offices that are running at a profit.

Why make hardships for our bank, our library, and the few businesses we have left in Ashton plus the 147 box holders--causing them to have to drive 15-20 mile trips to mail packages or time-sensitive mail.

Why make it harder for our rural carrier who would have to deliver all the mail, PLUS sell stamps and services and deal with some packages? One carrier will probably not be able to handle all of this and then you'll have to pay wages to another worker anyway.

Please evaluate the situation sensibly. We have written before and you don't seem to be listening. Thank you.

Received

Alfreda Verdoorn, director
Ashton Public Library

DEC 13 2011

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